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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [IAEA](#) [IR](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN: ISRAELI ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION ASSESSMENT
OF IRAN'S CURRENT ENRICHMENT CAPABILITIES AT NATANZ

Classified By: Gene A. Cretz, Deputy Chief of Mission.
Reasons: 1.4 (b)(d).

¶1. (S) In a June 12 meeting, Israel Atomic Energy Commission Nonproliferation Department Director Gil Reich (accompanied by new External Relations Director Joshua Zarka and Arms Control Department Director Merav Zafary) provided poloff with the IAEC's current assessment of Iran's uranium enrichment capability. Reich noted that the IAEC's assessment diverged in many areas from the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) May 23 report on Iran, which, he said, contains facts, but also raises some questions. Reich labeled as factual the IAEA report's statement that 260 kilograms of uranium gas had been fed into the cascades at Iran's enrichment facility in Natanz. At the time of the report, there were 11 cascades running at Natanz. Israel believes there are now a total of 18 cascades located "upstairs and downstairs" in the facility. The question, Reich continued, is why -- if 260 kilograms were fed into the cascades -- the Iranians did not report the quantity of enriched uranium produced, but only the grade (4.8 percent). The IAEC's interpretation of this, Reich said, is that the amount of output must have been very low -- hence Iran's decision not to publish figures on the quantity of output. Reich added, however, that the IAEA is not in the position to verify any numbers. He noted that virtually the same thing happened one year earlier, and that the IAEA was also then not in a position to verify facts on the ground. Reich also complained that the West tends to forget about Iran's IR-40 heavy water research reactor at Arak. He called "ridiculous" the IAEA report's claim that activities at the IR-40 reactor were being verified by satellite, observing that there is no way to verify enrichment activities without people on the ground.

¶2. (S) Reich continued with his analysis: Taking 260 kilograms of feed, and running it through an average of 6-8 cascades over a three month period does not make sense. The number of cascades involved should suggest an input of 900 kilograms. In Israel's analysis, feeding only 260 kilograms of uranium gas into the cascades suggests that Natanz is operating at only 33 percent capability, which in turn suggests that the facility is suffering serious technical problems.

¶3. (S) Reich stressed, however, that nobody should be content with this. All indicators suggest that the political impetus still plays the dominant role in Iran's nuclear weapons program, and that technical issues are still secondary in importance. The best thing that could happen for Iranian technicians, Reich said, would be a suspension of enrichment activity. This would take some of the political pressure off of them, and give them time and breathing space to analyze the situation and map out a way ahead to resolve technical obstacles. Reich said that Israel assumes that research and development only takes place in the cascades in the

"upstairs," part of the Natanz enrichment facility, where there are 5-8 cascades in a hall. He claimed that the cascades located in the "basement" of the Natanz facility are used for the "rushed" or accelerated part of Iran's enrichment process.

14. (S) Reich requested that poloff also relay a message that IAEC Director General Gideon Frank reportedly delivered during the June 7 session in Washington, D.C. of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Dialogue -- that Israel believes IAEA Deputy Director General for Safeguards Olli Heinonen has moved closer to IAEA DG Mohammed El-Baradei because he is feeling "neglected" professionally (e.g., on policy issues) and "personally betrayed" by friendly countries that apparently are no longer willing to share information with him. Reich said he understood that this issue is being examined within the interagency process in Washington. Without elaborating, he stressed that in Israel's view, this is a very important issue, and said that Israel will inform the USG if it decides to meet again with Heinonen.

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